

Message Text

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44

ACTION NEA-12

INFO OCT-01 EUR-25 ISO-00 OMB-01 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07

H-03 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01

SPC-03 SS-20 USIA-15 ACDA-19 IO-14 DRC-01 /150 W

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R 231108Z OCT 73

FM AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1699

INFO AMEMBASSY KABUL

AMCONSUL KARACHI

AMCONSUL LAHORE

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

AMEMBASSY TEHRAN

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E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, PFOR,HPK, AF

SUBJ: GOP MOVES AGAINST NATIONAL AWAMI PARTY IN FRONTIER

REF: ISLAMABAD 9097

SUMMARY: BHUTTO ADMINISTRATION AND WALI KHAN'S NATIONAL AWAMI PARTY MAY BE HEADED FOR SHOWDOWN IN NWFP. GOP HAS ARRESTED NUMBER OF NAP MEMBERS. WALI HAS REPLIED IN ESPECIALLY DEFIANT SPEECH. THERE IS SPECULATION THAT WALI HIMSELF MAY BE IN LINE FOR EARLY ARREST. UNCLEAR HOW NWFP POPULACE WOULD REACT TO THIS EVENTUALITY, BUT IT WOULD CLEKULY EXACERBATE PAK-AFGHAN RELATIONS. END SUMMARY.

1. POLITICAL

SITUATION IN NORTH WEST FRONTIER PROVINCE

(NWFP) HEATED UP OVER PAST WEEK AS BHUTTO SUPPORTERS

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AGAINST WALI KHAN AND NAP.

FOR PAST SEVERAL WEEKS WALI HAS BEEN TOURING PROVINCE MAKING ALMOST DAILY SPEECHES, EACH MORE DEFIANT THAN THE LAST (PESHAWAR A-16 NOTAL) AND INCLUDING FREQUENT FAVORABLE REFERENCES TO AFGHANISTAN. DESPITE PROVOCATION, PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT INITIALLY TOOK NO ACTION AGAINST WALI IN LINE WITH GOVERNOR ASLAM KHATTAK'S POLICY OF DECLINING TO USE EMERGENCY MEASURES AGAINST OPPOSITION AND PERMITTING RELATIVELY UNRESTRICTED POLITICAL ACTIVITY.

2. KHATTAK'S POLICY WAS ABRUPTLY REVERSED OCTOBER 17-18, HOWEVER, WHEN PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT (PRESUMABLY ACTING ON INSTRUCTIONS FROM ISLAMABAD) UNDERTOOK LARGE-SCALE ARRESTS THROUGHOUT PROVINCE. GOVERNMENT HAS ANNOUNCED THAT SOME 200 HAVE BEEN DETAINED SO FAR, WITH MORE ARRESTS SCHEDULED. NAP SUPPORTERS PUT FIGURE AT MORE THAN 400 AND CLAIM THAT THOSE ARRESTED INCLUDE MOST OF PARTY'S SECOND-ECHELON LEADERSHIP IN NWFP.

3. IN WAKE OF ARRESTS, WALI ADDRESSED MASS MEETING IN PESHAWAR OCTOBER 19 (ATTENDED BY CONSULATE LOCAL EMPLOYEE) AT WHICH HE CONTINUED TO BREATHE DEFIANCE. STARTING IN ON MIDDLE EAST SITUATION, WALI RIDICULED BHUTTO'S JUST-CONCLUDED TRIP TO IRAN AND TURKEY (BOTH OF THEM, HE ASSERTED, "ALLIED WITH ISRAEL") AND HINTED THAT PRIMIN WAS ACTING AT US BEHEST. HE APPEALED TO PEOPLE TO GET RID OF BHUTTO SO THAT COUNTRY COULD GIVE WHOLE-HEARTED SUPPORT TO MUSLIM BRETHREN. AFTER CASTIGATING BHUTTO FOR OPPRESSING OPPOSITION, DESTROYING DEMOCRACY AND UNDERMINING COUNTRY'S UNITY, WALI WOUND UP WITH WARNING THAT IF PAKISTAN WERE TO BREAK UP "WE WOULD NOT BE THE LOSERS; WE WOULD SIMPLY SHIFT THE TORKHAM BORDER TO THE ATTOCK BRIDGE" AND WOULD "STILL CONTINUE TO ENJOY THE GRAPES AND MELONS OF AFGHANISTAN."

4. WHILE WALI'S EARLIER SPEECHES HAD BEEN LARGELY BLACKED OUT IN PRESS, GOP-CONTROLLED MEDIA GAVE HIS TORKHAM-ATTOCK THREAT FRONT-PAGE TREATMENT. FOLLOWING DAY NWFP CHIEF MINISTER GANDAPUR CALLED PRESS CONFERENCE TO ANNOUNCE THAT PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT HAD STARTED "A CLEAN-UP OPERATION" (I.E., THE OCTOBER 17-18 ARRESTS) TO RID LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PROVINCE OF SUBVERSIVES AND OTHER ANTI-SOCIAL ELEMENTS. HE DENOUNCED WALI'S SPEECH, DECLARING THAT NWFP POPULACE WAS PREPARED DEFEND COUNTRY'S INTEGRITY TO LAST DROP OF BLOOD, AND WARNED THAT ANY ACTION THREATENING THIS UNITY WOULD BE MET BY SEVERE MEASURES. OTHER FIGURES ADDED THEIR VOICES TO CHORUS OF CRITICISM, WITH CENTRAL MINISTER AND FORMER NWFP GOVERNOR SHERPAO LIKENING WALI TO INDIRA GANDHI IN HIS ATTACKS ON IDEOLOGICAL BASIS OF

PAKISTAN. IN SOMEWHAT Milder TONES GOVERNOR KHATTAK ALSO CRITICIZED WALI AND WARNED THAT, ALTHOUGH HE HAD HITHERTO IMPOSED NO RESTRICTIONS ON PUBLIC MEETINGS IN PROVINCE, STERN ACTION WOULD BE TAKEN AGAINST ANYONE ATTEMPTING TO DISRUPT LAW AND ORDER. WALI, KHATTAK COMPLAINED, HAD NO PRINCIPLES OTHER THAN SEEKING TO ATTAIN HIS SELFISH ENDS AND TO ANNIHILATE INTERIOR MINISTER QAIYUM KHAN.

5. COMMENT: WITH GOVERNMENT CAMPAIGN AGAINST WALI APPARENTLY SHIFTING INTO HIEHER GEAR, HIS EARLY ARREST IS A POSSIBILITY. NOT CLEAR HOW NAP RANK-AND-FILE AND NWFP POPULACE AS WHOLE WOULD RESPOND TO WALI'S DETENTION. IN OCTOBER 21 CONVERSATION WITH CONSUL PESHAWAR AND POL COUNSELOR, KHYBER MAIL EDITOR ASGHAR ALI SHAH (A RELATIVELY MODERATE NAP SUPPORTER) DOUBTED THAT ARREST OF WALI WOULD LEAD TO VIOLENT REACTION ON NAP'S PART. HE FELT PARTY WAS TOO DEEPLY IMBUED WITH RESIDUE OF PRE-1947 ANTI-BRITISH TACTICS TO LAUNCH ARMED UPRISING. INSTEAD, HE FORESAW CAMPAIGN OF PEACEFUL PROTEST, COURTING ARREST, ETC., DESIGNED PRIMARILY "TO EMBARRASS BHUTTO BEFORE THE WORLD." THE ONE GROUP TO WHOM THIS MIGHT NOT APPLY, HE ADDED, WERE THE STUDENTS. SHOULD GOP MOVE AGAINST WALI, HE FELT THEY MIGHT WELL RESORT TO VIOLENT DEMONSTRATIONS WHICH COULD PRECIPITATE MORE SERIOUS DISORDERS.

6. QUITE APART FROM REACTION IN NWFP, SEEMS CLEAR THAT ANY MOVE AGAINST WALI WOULD BE TAKEN BADLY IN KABUL AND COULD FURTHER EXACERBATE ALREADY TENSE SITUATION. GOP WOULD UNDOUBTEDLY REJECT OUT OF HAND ANY AFGHAN PROTEST ON GROUNDS THAT WHATEVER GOP DID WITH WALI WAS NONE OF KABUL'S BUSINESS. UNFMYTUNATE FACT IS THAT, HOWEVER MUCH GOP LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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MAY HAVE GOADED HIM INTO INTEMPERATE REMARKS BY ITS REPRESSIVE ACTIONS, WALI'S TONGUE HAS PUT HIM IN POSITION OF VIRTUALLY ADVOCATING SECESSION. GOP WILL HAVE TO BE MATURE INDEED TO RESIST TEMPTATION CRACK DOWN ON HIM THIS TIME.
SOBER

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: POLITICAL PARTIES, POLITICAL LEADERS, ARRESTS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 23 OCT 1973
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: golinofr
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1973ISLAMA09175
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Film Number: n/a
From: ISLAMABAD
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1973/newtext/t19731018/aaaaamqu.tel
Line Count: 160
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE
Office: ACTION NEA
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators:
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: ISLAMABAD 9097
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: golinofr
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 19 DEC 2001
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <19-Dec-2001 by martinml>; APPROVED <18-Jan-2002 by golinofr>
Review Markings:

Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: GOP MOVES AGAINST NATIONAL AWAMI PARTY IN FRONTIER
TAGS: PINT, PFOR, AF, PK, NATIONAL AWAMI PARTY
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005